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Cap. 3.

WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
Washington 25, D.C.

March 1945

FACT SHEET ON EGGS

THE PROBLEM

To inform consumers of the place of eggs in daily meals, their nutritive value, appetizing ways of preparing them, and how to use available supplies effectively in periods of seasonal abundance.

THE WHY

Studies made by the U. S. Department of Agriculture have shown that although dietary levels have improved in the last 10 years, many people still are not getting fully adequate diets. Liberal consumption of eggs can help to improve the nutritive value of the diet, and, fortunately, egg supplies at present permit liberal consumption. Every year there is a seasonal swell in egg production, beginning in January and lasting through June, with the peak usually in April.

THE HOW

Eggs at any meal. The homemaker represents most consumers when it comes to buying the groceries. She can help meet the big wartime food problems of feeding her family well if she understands the various contributions that eggs make to good nutrition, and has suggestions on ways to use them. People who have their meals away from home, and the restaurant, hotel, and institutional food managers who serve them, need similar information so as to increase the use of eggs in public eating places and institutions. This will have the double-barreled effect of bolstering up the wartime civilian diet in specific ways and at the same time of utilizing a plentiful food in an efficient manner.

Few other foods can be as easily used every day -- in any meal -- as eggs. They are a versatile food. They can appear a number of ways at breakfast; the same goes for lunch. And in one form or another eggs can become the main dish for dinner.

New homemakers need ideas in the form of recipes. Experienced homemakers may have forgotten some of the ways they once prepared eggs, or may need to be stimulated to use all available eggs, by new recipes or variations of familiar recipes with new names. Some examples are: Luncheon dishes, main dinner dishes, eggs in combination with other foods, eggs in many desserts, in sauces, and in baking.

THE BACKGROUND

The food value of eggs. Eggs are an excellent source of protein, essential for building and repairing body tissues. They contain a number of vitamins, some in important amounts. They also provide several of the minerals in a readily assimilable form, especially iron, in which many American diets have been found to be deficient.

It's worth remembering that one graded "large" egg (weighing 2 ounces) provides 10 percent of the day's need for protein, 11 percent of the vitamin A, about 8 percent of the riboflavin, about 5 percent of the thiamine, and nearly 12 percent of the iron for the day. Doubling these figures, two large eggs will contribute one-fifth of the protein for the day, more than one-fifth of the vitamin A, about one-sixth of the riboflavin, nearly one-tenth of the thiamine, and a little less than one-fourth of the day's iron. With a number of other good protein foods in short supply, eggs as an unrationed food, merit attention for this factor and also because of their vitamin and mineral values. And remember, an egg's an egg in food value, whether its shell is brown or white !

What goes for color in eggs also goes for size. We all like large eggs for our breakfasts, but unfortunately hens lay many eggs that are less than 2 ounces, which is the average individual weight for "large" eggs weighing a minimum of 24 ounces per dozen. This year large eggs may be less readily available for domestic consumption because several million dozen will be needed for export overseas to our armed forces.

So, while we are eating more eggs to supplement our diminished supply of red meats and poultry, let's not forget that the relative food value of eggs is the same whether they are large, medium, or small.

Eggs need not be of top grade to be suitable and wholesome for use in baking and other cooked dishes. Grading is based primarily on interior physical qualities as determined first by candling and, secondly, by weight. Pound for pound, middle-grade eggs are as nutritious as top grades and just as satisfactory for use in cooking. Middle-grade eggs, and smaller ones as well, sell usually at noticeably lower prices.

Consumers should be encouraged to buy officially graded and certified eggs. U. S. egg grades are designed to help consumers get eggs correctly identified according to the grade they desire and are willing to pay for.

It is also important that producers, handlers, and consumers be told of the importance of keeping eggs under refrigeration at all times. Egg quality deteriorates rapidly under improper storage conditions.

Supplies. Egg production has increased sharply since the outbreak of the war. Expansion began in 1941. Production has exceeded goals every year since then. In 1944, about 4,800 million dozen were produced on farms -- a record high. This was 4 percent above the requested goal, and 5.8 percent above the average for the 5 pre-war years, 1935-39. Somewhat fewer eggs may be produced this year, but with the number of hens now on farms, apparently we should have enough for all needs.

Because of possible tight situations in facilities, transportation, and manpower, local surpluses and even some deficits as related to maximum demands may develop during the flush spring season.

Last year's heavy output brought plenty of trouble -- sagging markets that had to be supported by heavy Government buying and serious bottlenecks in labor, in storage space, in containers, and in transportation. We can go a long way toward avoiding similar difficulties this year by keeping consumers informed of the value of eggs in the diet, and thus stimulating greater use when eggs are plentiful, and relatively low priced.

To assure farmers a price amounting to at least 90 percent of parity in 1944 -- in the face of tremendously heavy production -- WFA bought heavily of eggs. WFA carried out various shell egg purchases programs for this purpose -- beginning as early as January 1944 and continuing into July when marketing leveled off. All told, WFA bought about 5,600,000 cases of shell eggs in direct support of the producer's market. WFA also purchased about 250,000,000 pounds of dried eggs or fully 65 million pounds more than originally sought.

The 1945 farm egg production goal is 4,350 million dozen eggs. While this is about 9 percent below 1944 farm production, it will take care of all anticipated needs. It should provide 349 eggs for each civilian. This is equal to the record 1944 consumption, and an increase of 51 eggs per person per year over the pre-war 1935-39 consumption. From a nutritional standpoint this is a very good thing.

The producer price of eggs will be supported by WFA, if necessary, at 27 cents a dozen for candled eggs (all bad eggs are taken out), and 24 cents a dozen for current receipt eggs (as they come from the nest.)

Containers. Egg cases are scarce. Limited material and labor makes it impossible to catch up with the need for new wooden and fiber cases. Some 40 million new cases will be needed to handle the 1945 egg crop. The shortage problems can be solved partly by handlers placing orders well in advance of needs, and by careful use and prompt repair of cases. WFA thinks enough can be made, if dealers get orders to manufacturers sufficiently early. Egg cartons also are scarce.

Transportation. The spring of 1945 likely will bring a repeat performance of the extremely tight situation in the spring of 1944. Trucks and tires are as scarce, if not scarcer, than last year. Railroad facilities will have to be used with the utmost efficiency.

Storage. To avoid waste, all feasible measures were taken in 1944 to move eggs into storage as soon as possible. Lack of labor, use of poor cases, and other factors slowed up the movement. Much temporary space had to be used to supplement existing space. So because of labor and transportation difficulties storage is likely to be a continuing problem in 1945 -- most noticeable in the flush production season.

TIMING OF THE 1945 SPRING PROGRAM

The big push on getting more eggs used is planned for the last week of April and the first week of May. However, preparations take into consideration possible need for starting the educational program before this and for carrying it beyond the 2 week period if conditions call for it.

Educational programs on nutritional values, and various uses for eggs, should be emphasized throughout the peak production period from March to June inclusive. The educational program should be patterned in accordance with the supply as related to domestic consumption, WFA procurement programs, and local abundances.

Beyond this need to "push" eggs when they are abundant is the fact that keeping consumers informed of the nutritional value and many uses of eggs is a continuous, long-time project.

